Emergency Services and Reducing Poverty: Seattle Human Services

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The City of Seattle is committed to supporting low- and moderate-income residents become and remain vital contributors to our community. Goal 2 of the 2005 – 2008 Consolidated Plan calls for our CDBG revenues and related resources to "help low-income people meet their basic self-care and other survival needs, and improve their social and economic well-being."

Focusing the City's Community's Continuum of Care Strategy

Seattle and King County are extremely proud of numerous accomplishments with respect to the Continuum of Care (CoC) service network in 2005. The Continuum of Care (CoC) is the infrastructure of services and facilities the City will use to meet the goals laid out by The Ten-Year Plan to End Homelessness. The Ten-Year Plan is not just about creating housing units—it contains the core strategies the City uses to organize and deliver housing and services. By endorsing this plan, Seattle agreed to work with other communities in the region to jointly advance the goal of ending homelessness through a coordinated network that emphasizes permanent housing alternatives and flexible supportive services.

Implementation of the Ten-Year Plan to End Homelessness in King County has come a long way since July 2004, when the first meeting of the Committee to End Homelessness Governing Board was held. In the past year, an Interagency Council has been formed to guide the board in its decision making. Chaired by Seattle Human Services Department Director Patricia McInturff and King County Housing Authority Director Stephen Norman, the Council meets monthly and includes representatives from many of the government, nonprofit, faith and business communities involved in the Ten-Year Plan effort. In addition, HSD staff sits on several committees focused on helping the Council do its work, including the Single Adults, Families, Youth, Communications, and Resources committees.

The City of Seattle has not hesitated to incorporate the goals of the Ten-Year Plan in our 2006 homelessness intervention planning and budget, including prioritization of CDBG/HUD funds. The Seattle Human Services Department awarded $4.7 million (including $2.6 million from CDBG and almost $250,000 from the Emergency Shelter Grant Program) in competitive shelter and transitional services funding to 14 nonprofit organizations for April 1-December 31, 2006, and is soliciting proposals for another $350,000 to preserve enhanced shelter capacity. The Department RFPs were written specifically to begin the change from a shelter system to a housing system. All city-funded agencies running shelters in 2006 will offer services or referrals to services that move homeless persons out of shelters and into transitional or long-term housing. These services will help homeless people stabilize their lives, get healthy, find work, and remain housed permanently as a critical step in the City's overall Anti-Poverty strategy.

The City has taken other major steps toward implementing the Ten-Year Plan to End Homelessness, including leveraging CDBG and other fund sources by:

- Dedicating Housing Levy and federal funds to create housing for low-income and homeless persons. The most recent funding round (spring 2005) will create 171 units that will house homeless persons.

- Funding "Connections," a service center to be operated by the Downtown Emergency Service Center at The Morrison. Opening this spring, Connections will:

  o offer a day center, meals, and showers and laundry facilities,

  o provide case management services, alcohol and drug treatment assessment and referral, access to a computer lab, and placement of clients in long-term housing, and

  o refer clients to available shelter beds, vocational training, job placement services and health care services.

  The City's construction investment was $2.1 million and annual operating costs are approximately $1 million.

- Managing the Safe Harbors Homeless Management Information System. Safe Harbors is a software application that allows agencies providing shelter, housing and other services to homeless people to collect client and household demographic information. While individual information is kept confidential, the data are aggregated to help the Ten-Year Plan partners understand needs and trends and improve our coordinated efforts to move people from homelessness to long-term housing.

- Investing more than $500,000 dollars to renovate a floor at City Hall to create a severe weather shelter where homeless persons can sleep safely on cold, stormy nights. The shelter space, which opened Thanksgiving 2005, is operated by the Salvation Army.

The Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS (HOPWA) program is an integral part of the CoC and the Seattle Human Services Department's (HSD) overall approach to preventing homelessness, assisting people to leave homelessness, and supporting housing stability for people and their families disabled by AIDS. HOPWA-funded organizations met their annual goal of serving about 400 people in King and Snohomish Counties through project-based and tenant-based rental assistance, capital repairs and development. (See also, 2005 HOPWA Formula Grantee Annual Reporting in this section).

Youth development programs within HSD serve the unique developmental needs of youth ages 13-24 to support and facilitate their ability to gain the skills and assets necessary to grow into healthy, successful adults and contributing members of the community. The issues they face and the solutions to their homelessness are significantly different from those older adults. Services providers, funders, and government staff are all working together on the Committee to End Homelessness to address barriers that keep youth and young adults from easily accessing emergency and transitional housing as well as projects that can bridge homeless young adult services with adult low income housing programs. HSD utilized CDBG and ESG

(Emergency Shelter Grant Program) funds to meet the needs of a broad cross-section of approximately 790 homeless youth to engage and assist these youth in their transition to safety and stable housing.
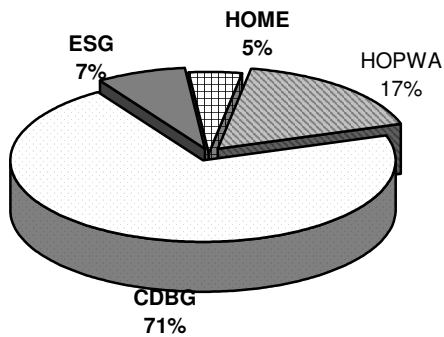
Family violence and poverty often go hand-in-hand and the two sets of problems are difficult to coordinate. Annually, police respond to an average of 12,000 9-1-1 service calls related to domestic violence and over 3,000 domestic violence related physical assaults. In 2005, the Seattle Human Services Department used ESG, McKinney and City General Funds (GF) to support a network of two confidential emergency shelters, a safe house, as well as two transitional houses for domestic violence victims and their children. Projects and associated funds included: New Beginnings Emergency Shelter (ESG, GF) and Transitional Housing (McKinney), Catherine Booth Emergency Shelter (ESG and GF), International District Housing (GF), and Hickman Transitional House (CDBG, GF). HSD also used general funds to support a hotel/motel voucher program to assist women and children in crisis when shelters were full.

Each facility offered advocacy services to assist victims of domestic violence and their children to: 1) access community resources, including legal services, healthcare, food, mental health services, income and other services to resolve safety needs and begin to rebuild their lives; 2) develop safety plans; and/or 3) navigate the legal system. Facilities also provided on-site services including child care, support groups to assist with chemical dependency or parenting skills development, clothing, bus fare, and children's programs.
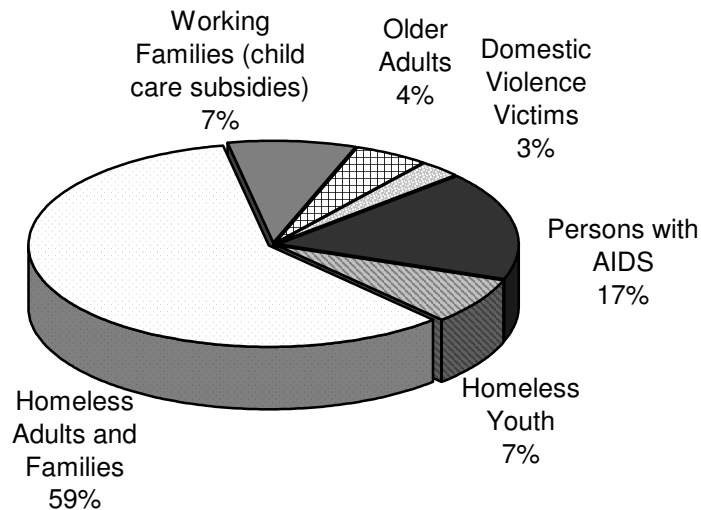
Funding Summary

The Human Services Department (HSD) supports a network of programs for older persons and adults with disabilities, children, youth, and families.   In 2005, HSD expended $7.7 million in HOME, HOPWA, ESG and CDBG funding to support achievement of the goals set out by the Ten-Year Plan to End Homelessness and the City's Anti-Poverty strategy.

Human Services Spending
Consolidated Plan Funds Only

ESG
7%

HOME
5%

HOPWA
17%

CDBG
71%

Spending by Population
Consolidated Plan Funds Only

Working Families (child care subsidies)
7%

Older Adults
4%

Domestic Violence Victims
3%

Persons with AIDS
17%

Homeless Youth
7%

Homeless Adults and Families
59%

Increase Stability of Low- and Moderate-Income People, Reduce Poverty

Seattle King County's Strategy for Ending Homelessness

The **Table 5** illustrates actions taken in the past year to carry out our goal/strategy to end chronic homelessness and better serve the needs of this population:

End Chronic Homelessness Goal Statement	Table 5: Accomplishments in 2005
Goal 1: Finalize and implement the chronic homelessness component of the Ten-Year Plan (TYP) to end homelessness in Seattle-King County.	• Analysis of existing data of chronically homeless individuals completed, and supported by data from several local entry points. • Adopted the single adult section that identified specific strategies for transitioning persons with disabilities and long histories of homelessness into housing. • The Single Adult Work Group identified housing first, expedited benefits, and services models with outreach and engagement as best strategies; analysis of data on chronicity of families is underway.
Goal 2: Expand access to supportive housing and services that meet the needs of the chronic homeless.	• The THCH Funders Group facilitated the development of two housing first pilots, one in South King County and one in downtown Seattle. • An additional 221 units of permanent supportive housing (Permanent Supportive Housing-PSH) for chronically homeless persons are in the pipeline for Seattle-King County. • The clinic at YWCA Opportunity Place is providing integrated medical, substance abuse, and psychiatric care for women, many with long histories of homelessness. • The City of Seattle's 2005 budget included funding to develop a day/hygiene center at the Downtown Emergency Services Center's (DESC) Morrison Hotel. • Implemented a $1.5 million 3 year grant through the McKinney Supportive Program to lease 60 permanent housing units for chronically homeless adults. • Opened the Women's Wellness Center at Opportunity Place to serve chronic homeless women. A nurse practitioner rotates in the clinic and Harborview Hospital to encourage high utilizers to receive care in the community. • Opened 1811 Eastlake project with 75 units of permanent housing for chronic substance abusers.

Goal 3: Create a coordinated system of outreach, engagement and transition for persons who are chronically homeless into permanent supportive housing.	• Formed a Task Force on Chronic Homelessness to evaluate the current system of outreach and engagement. • The state replaced $80 million of an $82 million short fall resulting from the changes in the interpretation of CMS/Medicaid rules. A portion of those funds are now earmarked for local outreach & engagement services. The TYP identified the need for a Mental Health Task Force on chronic homelessness to analyze and increase system coordination. • The Community Court Diversion Pilot was implemented and 35 individuals have been served to date, linking participants to the continuum of housing, alcohol and drug treatment, employment, and education services.
Goal 4: Expand access to and use of mainstream support services.	• Hired the Technical Assistance Collaborative (TAC), Inc. to explore how to capture more Medicaid and other mainstream service dollars for projects serving persons who are chronically homeless. TAC's research and site visit will conclude in an implementation plan. • The Salvation Army's HOPE program enrolled 50 participants, emphasizing homeless veterans. Thirty-five people successfully received Social Security disability benefits. • The Belltown DSHS successfully expedited incarcerated individuals onto SSI or SSDI through a presumptive eligibility pilot. • The Street to Home Initiative enrolled 5 pilot participants in a work release facility with intensive support services. • Received a HRSA for a dental care expansion grant. -

Increase Stability of Low- and Moderate-Income People, Reduce Poverty

The Table 6 illustrates our actions and progress in 2005 to address other homelessness goals set by the CoC.

Other Homelessness Goal Statement	Table 6: 2005 Homeless Program Coordination Accomplishments

Goal 1: Coordinate region-wide efforts to end homelessness in King County by the year 2012.	• Funded new pubic – private housing and services for homeless:
	  a. Sound Families Initiative released an RFP to fund supportive transition/ transition-in-place housing with services for families.
	  b. Washington Families Fund (WFF) released an RFP to fund services in supportive housing for families.
	• Seattle coordinate funding decisions to align local/state/federal and private capital and services funding and prioritized housing for households with income less than 30% of AMI.

Goal 2: Improve the already strong continuum of homeless services.	• Added 127 units of Permanent Supportive Housing for families and single adults not meeting HUDs definition of chronically homeless. • Added 130 units of transitional housing (TH) for families with children, and 78 for single individuals
	• Participated in an Urban Institute study of the effects of participation in a TH program on homeless families.
	• .Developed minimum physical and programmatic standards for city funded shelter and TH projects.

	• Began to convert the CoC system to the goals of the TYP through completion of outcome-based Request for Proposal process:
	
	  a. Solicited proposals for the provision of its 2006 shelter and transitional housing/services (including ESG, CDBG, and City general funds).
	
	  b. Allocated 2006 homeless youth services through a Request For Investment process.
	
	  c. Allocated 2005-2006 Domestic Violence services through a Request for Investment Process

Goal 3: Develop System Infrastructure to improve access to services and housing.	• Completed pilot phase of the Safe Harbors Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) Data Integration Feasibility study, • Completed the 2004 Seattle-King County HIV/AIDS Housing Plan.
	• Tested accuracy of all client data entered into the system.
	• Implement collaboration with Snohomish County, WA State for the HMIS partnership.

	• Coordinated collection/ analysis of system-wide homelessness data to establish benchmarks, monitor program success and determine gaps.
	• Complete first reports generated using HMIS datbase for HUD, WA State, King County, Seattle, and United Way.
Goal 4: Strengthen discharge policies and procedures from mainstream systems to prevent such discharge from immediately resulting in homelessness.	• Established a pilot project with DSHS and Family Services, a local nonprofit service provider, to test a coordinated one stop approach to ease the entitlement application process for homeless families. • Received Homeless Veteran Reintegration Project grant from the US Department of Labor to expand services to homeless women. • Implemented the recommendations contained in the Citizens Advisory Commission on Homeless Encampments published in August 2004.
Goal 5 Advocate reducing federal and other barriers to delivering services and housing that could prevent an end to homelessness.	• Seattle and King County voters approved an initiative to create a dedicated human services revenue source

Program-Specific Accomplishments And Outcomes

Table 8, following on page 52, identifies the specific program accomplishments of programs supported by the four Consolidated Plan funds, the City's General Fund, and the City's McKinney homelessness funding. Overall, programs supported by the Consolidated Plan funds provided over 270,000 bednights of emergency shelter and transitional housing. Over 8,000 persons (duplicated count between programs) were provided emergency shelter. Another 322 persons received transitional shelter, and over 11,000 persons received a variety of housing support and case management services.

Our shelter, transitional housing, and supportive services programs allowed 996 people to secure and retain their housing for a minimum 6 month period.

Homeless Youth and Young Adults

Program Accomplishments

Needs and services for homeless youth/young adults are addressed separately in the Ten-Year Plan to End Homelessness.   The following performance and outcome accomplishments are in addition to the preceding table and are inclusive of Consolidated Plan and non-Consolidated Plan funding.

Homeless Youth Needs and Prevention Elements:

1. Actions for youth/young adults include services listed below that address basic needs for food, shelter, hygiene and assistance in finding stable housing, employment, health care, education and other community services

    - **Orion Center YouthCare: 115 homeless youth and 62 homeless young adults.** Orion Center provides drop-in services including meals, hygiene, employment training, Seattle Public School, access to stable housing, health care, therapeutic experiential activities, and case management.

    - **Catholic Community Services/University District Youth Center: 530 youth, 82 young adults.** Drop-in center includes meals, showers, clothing, information & referral, health care, educational services, and shelter/housing, transitioned to more stable housing, or maintain stable housing for homeless 13-22 year olds.

    - **Catholic Community Services/UDYC: 530 youth** had basic needs met; **104 youth** referred to in-house services.

    - **United Indians of All Tribes/Youth Home: 44 youth** had basic needs met including food, transitional housing, employment training, access to stable housing, health care and case management services.

    - **YMCA/Young Adults In Transition: 13** young adults had basic needs basic needs met in transitional housing

2. Actions to help homeless youth make transition to permanent housing and independent living.

    - **Straley House YouthCare: 22 young adults moved into stable housing:** Straley House provides long-term transitional housing with supportive case management for homeless 18-22 year olds.

    - **United Indians of All Tribes Youth Home: Stable Housing for 28 youth/young adults.** Services include transitional housing, case management to transition to independent living for homeless 16-21 years olds. This number is part of the total 44 youth/young adults listed in #1 above.

- **YMCA/Young Adults In Transition: 6 young adults moved from transitional to permanent housing.** YAIT provides long-term transitional housing with supportive case management for homeless 18-24 years old. This number is part of the 13 young adults listed in #1 above.

Homelessness and Domestic Violence

Program Accomplishments

Shelters for victims of domestic violence provided emergency housing for 508 women and children in 2005. Clients also received advocacy services that helped the victims access community resources, developed safety plans, and/or navigate the legal system. The Hotel/Motel Voucher program assisted another 439 individuals with emergency shelter. Twenty-eight households were assisted with transitional housing. Of these 20 transitioned to permanent housing. (See Table 7 on following page.)

Table 7: 2005 Annual Accomplishments – Domestic Violence (ESG)				
Strategies/Outcomes	**2005 Goal (Individuals)**	**2004 Accomplishments (Individuals)**	**2005 Accomplishments (Individuals)**	**Comments**
Provide confidential shelters, crisis intervention, supportive counseling and related services	240	349 (175 women, 174 children) New Beginnings	307 (165 women, 142 children) New Beginnings	The City shifted from measuring outcomes based bed-nights to reporting the # of individuals, families, or households served by DV providers several years ago. At that time, providers chose to set conservative contract goals. With several years data now collected based on the new standard, trends are established. The City recently completed an RFP and is working with providers to set realistic goals based on the new measurement. Projected service goals may be lower than the current targets due to changing allowable lengths of stay from approx. 30 to 90 days.
	185	210 (122 women, 88 children) Catherine Booth House.	179 (100 children, 79 children) Catherine Booth House	
	20	-----	22 International District Housing Alliance	
	-----	-----	439 Hotel / Motel Voucher Program	
Transition households to permanent safe housing	10 (for 2004)	10 Hickman 6 New Beginnings	10 Hickman 10 New Beginnings (from 3/05-12/05)	When the 2004 targets were set, staff did not take into account outcomes for the McKinney-funded New Beginnings program. Addition of this data is reflected for 2005.
Assist women and children who are victims of domestic violence with transitional housing	50 Hickman 15 New Beginnings	40 Hickman 12 New Beginnings	44 Hickman (women & children) 12 New Beginnings (households)	

Obstacles to Achieving More Success in Ending Homelessness

Despite these reported system accomplishments, there are many barriers to fully achieving the quality outcomes we seek each year. Two of biggest barriers are the lack of affordable housing and the continued reduction in state and federal funding for mental health and substance abuse treatment.

The high cost of housing in King County makes it difficult for very low-income households to find affordable housing. The "housing wage" in King County – the hourly wage that a worker would need to earn in a 40-hour week in order to afford a one bedroom apartment is $14.02 per hour. While there is a strong commitment to increasing affordable housing in our region, we are constrained by the lack of appropriate locations, community concerns, limited capital funding, and uncertainty regarding long-term funding commitments.

There is also a demand for additional confidential shelter beds and transitional housing for domestic violence victims and their children. A total of 81 such shelter beds exist in all of King County and providers estimate they turn away ten to fifteen requests for emergency shelter for every person who receives assistance. The demand for transitional housing also exceeds capacity. For every vacancy, providers receive about twenty qualified applicants.

A second issue faced by domestic violence victim service providers is cultural competency. In 2005, approximately 80 percent of the clients of the domestic violence shelters, including hotel/motel voucher program, were people of color and/or refugees and immigrants.

A third challenge concerns the lack of economic and legal services. A more comprehensive strategy, including job training, income assistance, child care, and affordable legal representation, is needed to help battered women break the cycle of violence and rebuild their lives.

Untreated mental illness and substance abuse issues continue to impact housing stability and success. In the 2003 One Night Count Survey, 1,372 homeless individuals were reported to have one or more disabilities—35% had a mental illness and 46% had alcohol substance abuse issues. In 2003, 2,325 adults in King County's Mental Health Regional Services Network outpatient programs had at least one confirmed episode of homelessness and 555 had multiple episodes or an extended period of homelessness. In Seattle, 575 individuals were served by the system's homeless outreach system.

One of the biggest obstacles facing the City of Seattle in ending homelessness is the effect of fragmentation in the support systems accessed by people who experience homelessness. Mainstream resource systems are complex to navigate and most service systems and programs are not designed with the realities of homeless people in mind. Economic and legal services are greatly needed to help homeless low-income persons, especially victims of domestic violence, rebuild their lives. More comprehensive services are needed, including job training, income assistance, child care, health care, and outreach and engagement to reach the hardest to serve. The City of Seattle continues to work toward a seamless continuum of support.